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RAFAEL ALBUQUERQUE

AMERICAN VAMPIRE

VERTIGO

The
BLACKLIST
Part Two



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suggested for
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IT WAS THIRTY YEARS AGO
THAT I FIRST SET FOOT
IN LOS ANGELES.



I WAS TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD. I HAD
SOME MONOLOGUES MEMORIZED, I HAD
ENOUGH RENT FOR THREE MONTHS IN THE
CHEAPEST BOARDING HOUSE ON SUNSET.



THE FIRST NIGHT I WAS THERE, THE
OWNER, MS. DONNER, SAT US NEW
GIRLS DOWN AND GAVE US A SPEECH.

"LOS ANGELES," SHE SAID, "IS ABOUT
MEETING PEOPLE WHO'LL CHANGE YOUR
LIFE, LADIES. THE TRICK, THOUGH, IS
BEING ABLE TO KNOW WHO TO TRUST."

THEN OUT OF
NOWHERE, SHE
POINTED AT ME
AND SHE SAID...



"YOU FOR EXAMPLE,
MS. JONES, YOU'RE
GOING TO BE VERY BAD
AT THIS. YOU'VE GOT A
WIDE EYE. WATCH OUT
FOR THAT, SQUINT,
SQUINT, SQUINT."

I MOVED OUT
THAT NIGHT.

I STAYED AT THE BUS STATION FOR A WEEK,
UNTIL A ROOM OPENED UP AT MRS. PRUITT'S.
I TOLD MYSELF MRS. DONNER DIDN'T KNOW
WHAT THE HELL SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT. I
WAS DETERMINED TO PROVE HER WRONG...

...BUT WITHIN
A YEAR, I'D
BE DEAD.



NOW IT'S
1954.

I'VE COME BACK TO LOS ANGELES FOR
THE FIRST TIME IN THIRTY YEARS, AND I'D
LIKE TO THINK MY JUDGMENT IS BETTER.

BUT THE SAD
FACT IS...

...I'M STANDING HERE WITH
SKINNER SWEET, ONE OF
THE MEANEST UNDEAD
BASTARDS ON THE PLANET.

TOGETHER, WE'RE ON
A SECRET MISSION TO
HUNT DOWN VAMPIRES
BEING SHELTERED BY
HOLLYWOOD'S ELITE.

SOMEWHERE UP
THERE, MRS. DONNER
MUST BE FEELING
PRETTY GODDAM
SMUG RIGHT NOW.

I'VE GOT TO
SAY, YOU LOOK
GOOD IN THAT
SKIRT...

QUIET.
SOMEONE'S
COMING.

THE BLACKLIST

part two of six

SCOTT SNYDER writer **RAFAEL ALBUQUERQUE** artist

DAVE MCCAIG colors **JARED K. FLETCHER** letters **ALBUQUERQUE** cover

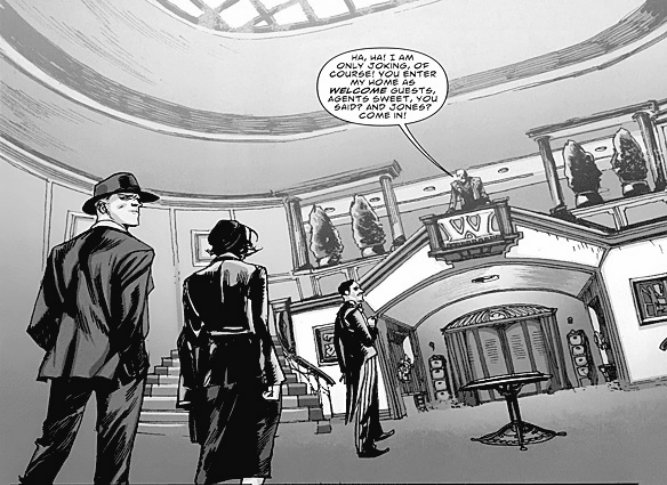
DAVE JOHNSON variant cover **GREGORY LOCKARD** asst. editor **MARK DOYLE** editor

AMERICAN VAMPIRE created by **SCOTT SNYDER & RAFAEL ALBUQUERQUE**

MAY I
HELP YOU?

I SURE HOPE
SO. WE'RE AGENTS
SWEET AND JONES FROM
THE HOUSE UN-AMERICAN
ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE.
WE HAVE AN APPOINTMENT
WITH YOUR EMPLOYER,
MR. WELLS WHITE, THE
PRODUCER OF--

SHOOT THEM.
DAVID! EXECUTE
THEM ON THE
PORCH!



HA, HA! I AM ONLY JOKING, OF COURSE! YOU ENTER MY HOME AS WELCOME GUESTS, AGENTS SWEET, YOU SAID? AND JONES? COME IN!



PRESTON, ACTUALLY.

PRESTON, THEN!

YOU KNOW, THERE WAS A PRESTON FAMILY, BACK IN AUSTRIA, THAT WAS NEIGHBORS OF MY PARENTS. THE BOY, THE YOUNGEST, HE HAD NO ARMS, I REMEMBER. HIS FATHER MADE HIM A CONTRAPTION WITH ALL KINDS OF GEARS AND PULLEYS. THIS WAS BEFORE THE WAR. PAST ACQUAINTANCES.



THAT'S WHAT WE'RE HERE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT, MR. WHITE. PAST ACQUAINTANCES.

YES, I FIGURED AS MUCH. I AM HAPPY TO TALK.



ROAAARRRR!!!



MY CATS,
FORGIVE ME, I
SHOULD HAVE SAID
SOMETHING.



YOU
THINK?

MR. WHITE, GETTING TO THE POINT,
THERE'S SUSPICION AMONG THE
PEOPLE WE WORK FOR THAT YOU
MAY HAVE MADE SOME...

...POOR DECISIONS
RECENTLY,
REGARDING THE
COMPANY YOU
KEEP. WE'RE HERE
TO GIVE YOU A
CHANCE TO COME
CLEAN.

THERE WAS A
ZOO NOT FAR FROM
MY CHILDHOOD HOME. WE
USED TO GO SEE THE LIONS
AND THEY WERE STARVING.
I MEAN THEY WERE DYING
OF STARVATION THERE,
IN THEIR CAGE.



TO SEE THEM
WAS A TRAGEDY,
BUT IT IMPRESSED
A VALUABLE LESSON
UPON A BOY SUCH
AS MYSELF. THERE
IS NO TRUTH IN
TOTALITARIAN-
ISM.



THERE IS ONLY ROOM IN THIS WORLD FOR INDIVIDUALISM. YOU LOOK OUT FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR OWN AND YOU GET WHAT SPOILS YOU CAN.

THIS IS WHAT MY FILMS ARE ABOUT. "THE DAME IN THE WINDOW". "MURDER AT DAWN"... THEY ARE ABOUT LEARNING TO BE SELFISH. ACCEPTING IT.



I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO KNOCK SELFISHNESS...

...BUT HELL IF IT CAN'T GET YOU INTO BAD COMPANY, TOO.



...YOU CAN ASK ME WHATEVER YOU WANT...

...I HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE, AND FURTHER-MORE...

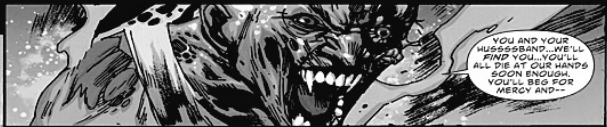


...YOU WILL FIND I'M AS BIG AN OPPONENT OF "THE REDS" AS YOU ARE.













YOU...
YOU'RE ONE
OF THEM,
TOO!



BUT
YOU ARE A
DIFFERENT
KIND?



HA!
YOU DON'T
KNOW THE
HALE OF IT,
BROTHER.



I WILL
NOT TELL YOU
ANYTHING! YOU
CAN KILL ME,
BUT I--

HEY!



RIGHT NOW, MY
HUSBAND IS DYING
IN A HOSPITAL BED
FROM LOSS OF
BLOOD.

THE VAMPIRE YOU WERE HIDING IN
THIS HOUSE BELONGED TO A COVEN
THAT DID IT. RIGHT NOW I'M ALL
ABOUT--HOW DID YOU PUT
IT--"MAKING IT LAST."

PUCKER
UP, WELLSY-
BOY.

ALL RIGHT,
ALL RIGHT! I WILL
TELL YOU WHAT I
KNOW. PLEASE,
JUST DON'T--



GODDAMIT.

SNIPER!
OVER THERE!



I GOT
HIM--

FORGET IT--
WE GOT TO GET
OUT OF HERE. THE
WAY YOU TOOK OUT
THAT OTHER CAR, THE
COPS'LL BE HERE
ANY MINUTE.



HE WAS
SCARED, SKINNER.
NOT JUST
OF US.

FORGET IT,
DOLLY...

"...FEEL SORRY
FOR THE CATS."



...

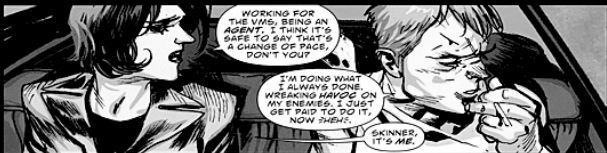
WHAT IS
IT? YOU WANT
TO PARK AND
NECK?

SO ARE
YOU GOING TO
TELL ME?

TELL YOU...
WHAT?

ABOUT WHERE
YOU'VE BEEN, ABOUT
WHAT HAPPENED
TO YOU.

WHAT
DO YOU
MEAN, WHAT
"HAPPENED"
TO ME?



HOLY HELL. THIS IS GOOD. LAST I REMEMBER, YOU STABBED ME IN THE CHEST, LEFT ME FOR DEAD ON A HUNK OF ROCK IN THE JAPLANDS. AND NOW YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT ME, ABOUT WHERE I BEEN, WHAT I DONE.



THE WAY YOU TOOK OUT JEEVES BACK THERE, AND THE WAY YOU HANDLED WHITE...

...YOU MIGHT SEE SOMETHING DIFFERENT IN ME, BUT I SEE SOMETHING DIFFERENT IN YOU, TOO.



"I'M AFRAID THE CHANGES IN HIS CONDITION HAVE BEEN MINOR AT BEST."





AGENT PRESTON...
PEARL, IF YOU DON'T
WANT TO DO THE REPORT
RIGHT NOW, I
UNDERSTAND.

I HAVE FOOD
FOR YOU. IT'S AB
NEGATIVE, SAME AS
YOUR HUSBAND'S. IRISH
DESCENT, THIRD
GENERATION...CLOSE
AS WE COULD
GET IT.

OBVIOUSLY IT
WON'T TASTE
THE SAME, BUT
WE'RE--

WHAT DO
YOU HAVE ON
SKINNER?

DON'T
PRETEND
YOU DON'T
KNOW WHAT
I'M TALKING
ABOUT.

YOU'VE GOT
SOME KIND OF
LEASH ON HIM.
I'M OUT THERE
WITH HIM, I WANT
TO KNOW
WHAT IT IS.

AGENT
POOLE--
CALVIN, HE
DIDN'T TELL
YOU THIS
ALREADY?

SIGH

TELL ME
WHAT?

...
WAIT
HERE A
MOMENT.

I'M
SORRY?

IT'S CALLED A P.R.V. PAVEL
RELEASE VALVE. NAMED AFTER
A SCIENTIST WE INVESTIGATED
ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO.
SOMETHING OF AN EINSTEIN OF
VAMP-KILLING. THE DESIGNS
WERE FOUND IN HIS
RESEARCH.



ONCE INSERTED INTO A SUBJECT, IT ALLOWS
US TO REMOTELY RELEASE A SUBSTANCE
INTO THEIR BLOODSTREAM. FOR EXAMPLE, IF
WE PUT IN A CARPATHIAN VAMPIRE, WE'D
USE AN ALKALINE SAWDUST. OR
FOR AN AMERICAN--



GOLD.

GOLD DUST, YES, IT'S AN EFFECTIVE
TETHER FOR A CHARACTER LIKE
SKINNER. THE DEPARTMENT OWES
YOU A THANKS, ACTUALLY.



WHAT ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT?



IT WAS THE
WOUND YOU MADE,
THE INCISION WITH
THE GOLD BLADE,
BACK ON TAIPEIN,
THAT ALLOWED US
TO INSERT THIS
LITTLE GUY.

I HAVE TO SAY, I WAS A LITTLE WORRIED
ABOUT PAIRING YOU UP WITH SKINNER FOR
THAT VERY REASON. NOT THAT HE COULD
HURT YOU, HE NEEDS OUR PERMISSION
TO TRANSFORM, TO ATTACK, HELL,
TO TAKE A PISS.



BUT EVEN
SO, HE CAN BE
A PRETTY NASTY
SON-OF-A-BITCH
WHEN HE GETS
MAD.

I'M A BIG
GIRL, AGENT
BIX.

I'LL TAKE
MY DINNER
NOW.



"FORGIVE ME,
SIRE..."



...BUT I
STILL DO NOT
UNDERSTAND WHY
YOU DIDN'T LET ME
SHOOT HER WHEN
WE HAD THE
CHANCE.

TRUST
IN YOUR
SIRE...



SHE THINKS,
AS THEY ALL
DO, THAT THEY ARE
PROTECTED IN
THEIR LITTLE
FORTRESS.



"BUT WE WILL TAKE
GREAT PLEASURE IN
WATCHING HER BE
TORN APART, PIECE
BY PIECE, WHEN THE
TIME IS RIGHT."



"...TORN APART BY THE
ONE SHE WILL COME TO
TRUST THE MOST..."



"...HER MAKER,
SKINNER SWEET."

To be
Continued...

ON THE

LEDGE

Punk Rock



JESUS

by Sean Murphy



SEAN MURPHY has spilled ink on such books as *JOE THE BARBARIAN*, *AMERICAN VAMPIRE: SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST* and *HELLBLAZER: CITY OF DEMONS*. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and two dogs—all three of whom bother him when he's trying to work. His next book, *PUNK ROCK JESUS*, hits the shelves July 11th.

BY Sean Murphy

I stopped praying in 2003.

I was living with a friend in Colorado who loved to surf. I loved road trips, so we threw two boards into my pickup and headed to California. It was good to get away—I'd hit a major writer's block with a script I'd been working on called *PUNK ROCK JESUS*. One of my main characters was (like me) a devout Catholic. He was also in the IRA, so I ended up doing a lot of research into the history of The Cause. Much of the IRA dogma made no sense to me, and while I began questioning the motivation behind IRA convictions, I also began questioning my own Christianity. I didn't know what to think anymore, so I put both PRJ and my faith on hold.

My friend was an atheist, and soon I found myself very convinced by his beliefs—these based on science and not on dogma. But becoming an atheist overnight was too scary, so instead I decided to try it for a month and see how it fit me.

Indeed, I had a lot to think about while we made our way to California.

My test came once we arrived. I have a fear of the ocean, so naturally I was a terrible surfer. At one point I was knocked down really hard by a roaring wave—I wasn't even able to take a full breath before being sucked under the black currents. I waited for the wave to pass over before trying to head back to the surface, but once I did, I realized that I didn't know where the surface was. Then I felt another wave pass overhead—this one scraping my head against the surrounding coral. I didn't know which way was up and I was too scared to open my eyes. Panicking, I began doing the thing I'd spent twenty-three years doing whenever I was in trouble: I started praying.

But then I stopped. I promised myself that I wouldn't pray for a month, and it wouldn't be much of an effort if I broke that promise the very same week. So instead of panicking, I managed to use my head.

Just then I felt my leg tug. Luckily the leash to the board hadn't slipped off. Somewhere, floating on the surface, was a surfboard that had my name on it. I quickly followed the leash to the surface and got my head above water. Fresh air.

If I had allowed myself to pray in that instant before finding the leash, I would have been CERTAIN that a god had saved me. Instead, I'd found the leash on my own. I no longer believed in a god, rather that we're each the master of our own fate.

Back in Colorado, I found that fixing *PUNK ROCK JESUS* meant starting over, changing the Jesus clone from a Christian into an atheist. As my script began taking form, so did my atheistic convictions. And on July 11th, I'll finally be able to publish.

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